



# Jump-start your German research with Ortsfamilienbücher / Ortssippenbücher

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## OBJECTIVES

You will be able to:

- Describe what Ortsfamilienbücher/Ortssippenbücher are.
- Locate printed and online copies.
- Use OFBs/OSBs to find and trace families.

## What are OFBs/OSBs?

Ortsfamilienbücher/Ortssippenbücher (OFBs/OSBs) are town family books or town lineage books. Ortssippenbuch is an older name than Ortsfamilienbuch. They present genealogical data in family units which are linked to ancestors and descendants. They have been compiled by individuals or organizations. Sources for OFBs may include original records, such as local parish registers, civil registration records, land and court records, and sometimes published material.

The scope of OFBs is variable. Some may include all individuals from a specific town or area, no matter their religion. Others may focus on just one religious parish within a town. The year range covered by a book is also variable. Some may go back to when the records started, such as the *Familienbuch Dieburg 1603-1900: mit Filiale Klein Zimmern* (Otzberg, Germany: Gendi, c.2014). Others may focus on a more limited year range, such as the *Ortsfamilienbuch Karlsruhe: Teil 2 Reformierte Kirche 1722-1821* (Plaidt, Germany: Cardamina Verlag, c.2014).

OFBs that are published online can be a work in progress, allowing for new information to be added. Changes to data published online can be made a lot quicker and cheaper than data published in a book. While printed OFBs have traditionally focused on an individual village or parish, the format of online OFBs allows for some non-traditional OFBs. A few online OFBs present compiled information focused on different groups of people. Instead of focusing on all individuals in a specific town, they may focus on:

- residents from a specific region, such as Memelland  
<https://ofb.genealogy.net/memelland/> ,
- emigrants from a specific area, such as emigrants from Soltau and Heidmark  
[https://ofb.genealogy.net/soltau\\_heidmark\\_auswanderer/](https://ofb.genealogy.net/soltau_heidmark_auswanderer/),
- military units, such as the Pomeranian Infantry Regiment #49  
[https://ofb.genealogy.net/pommern\\_reg49/](https://ofb.genealogy.net/pommern_reg49/) .

## What information do they include?

- A preface describing the compiled work and how to use it.
- A list of sources used to compile the book.
- An explanation of abbreviations used.
- Additional notes and helpful information, such as regarding variations in the spelling of surnames, or references to common place names.

- Birth, marriage, and death dates and places. Additional information may include occupation, religion, and emigration. Online OFBs may also include data from outside the focused location of the book, such as for residents who were born or who died elsewhere.
- Some books may include maps, a history of the town, and other historical information.

## Usefulness

- OFBs can help you quickly identify and trace a family line back several generations.
- Helpful guides in locating original records.
- Typewritten text is easier to read than the old German script.
- Dates and relationships presented as numbers and in a standardized format instead of a written paragraph decrease the language barrier.

## CAUTION

Because OFBs are compiled from other records they are considered derivative sources. As such, they could contain mistakes, such as translation or transcription errors, and incorrect conclusions drawn regarding relationships or places. Information found in OFBs should always be verified with original records, wherever possible.

## Where can I find OFBs?

You are more likely to find an OFB if your ancestors came from the following areas:

Baden	Pomerania
East Friesland	Silesia
East Prussia	Saarland
Hesse	Thuringia
Lower Saxony	Waldeck
Palatinate and Rhineland (Bavaria)	Württemberg
Between the Elbe and Weser rivers	Area of the Danube Swabians

Generally, one will not find OFBs for midsized or large cities. However, there are exceptions, as in the case of the OFB for Karlsruhe (mentioned above), which will be a five-volume set once it is completed.

OFBs are published in print or online. Some printed OFBs have been digitized, making it possible to view them online. With the ease of publishing online, many new OFBs are published each month. If you cannot find an OFB for an ancestral village, check again later.

## Online

- Hundreds of online OFBs are available in the OFB database of Genealogy.net:  
<https://ofb.genealogy.net/>
- List of available OFBs:  
<http://wiki-de.genealogy.net/Kategorie:Ortsfamilienbuch>
- List of OFBs by region:  
[https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Germany\\_Town\\_Genealogies\\_and\\_Parish\\_Register\\_Inventories\\_on\\_the\\_Internet#Bibliographies\\_of\\_Town\\_Genealogies](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Germany_Town_Genealogies_and_Parish_Register_Inventories_on_the_Internet#Bibliographies_of_Town_Genealogies)

## Printed

### **Libraries and archives**

- *Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah.*  
The library's large collection of printed OFBs includes hardcopies as well as digitized copies. Search the catalog or the digital books collection. In a place name search, OFBs are usually included in the "Genealogy" record type.  
Catalog: <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog>  
Lookup service: <https://www.familysearch.org/family-history-library/family-history-library-records-look-up-service>
- *St. Louis County Library (SLCL) in St. Louis, Missouri.*  
This library holds one of the largest collections of OFBs in North America, which includes books for Germany, Alsace and Lorraine in France, and former German-speaking areas in eastern Europe, such as former East Prussia, Banat, Batschka in Hungary, Romania, and Serbia. The library offers a lookup service and can copy up to 30 pages per book.  
SLCL library: <https://www.slcl.org/content/ortssippenbücher-familienbücher-held-history-and-genealogy-department>  
SLCL OFB list by place (as of September 2020):  
<https://www.slcl.org/sites/default/files/OSBs%20alphabetical%20by%20place%20name%20sep%202020.pdf>  
Lookup request: <https://www.slcl.org/content/lookup-request>
- *Zentralstelle für Personen- und Familiengeschichte (Central Office for Personal and Family History) in Frankfurt am Main-Höchst, Germany.*  
This archive is a collection point for many German OFBs.  
OFB list: <http://www.ahnenforschung-hessen.de/zentralstelle/ortssippenbuecher.htm>
- *Gruppen Familien- und Wappenkunde in der Stiftung Bahn-Sozialwerk GFW/BSW (Family and Heraldry Groups in the Bahn-Sozialwerk Foundation) in Ludwigshafen/Rhein, Germany.*  
The society's archive holds a large collection of OFBs (about 3,000), mainly from Germany, but also from former German settlement areas.  
<http://www.gfw-bsw.de/Archiv/index.php>

### **Genealogical societies**

OFBs from a certain region may also be held by local genealogical societies. Contact genealogical societies in your area of interest about any available unpublished OFBs or books currently in the process of being compiled.

- *Arbeitskreis donauschwäbischer Familienforscher e.V. (AKdFF) (Working group of Danube Swabian genealogists) in Sindelfingen, Germany.*  
Their OFB webpage includes links to PDF copies of out-of-print copies, online OFBs at genealogy.net, as well as links to online OFBs on other websites.  
AKdFF OFB page: <https://www.akdff.de/wp/ortssippenbuch-neu/#>
- *Arbeitskreis für Familienforschung Baden-Durlach Unterland (Working group for family research Baden-Durlach Unterland) in Karlsruhe, Germany.*  
Their website provides information about recently and soon-to-be published books, as well as a list of past publication.  
<http://www.ak-bd.de/>
- *Gesellschaft für Familienforschung in Franken (GFF) (Society for Family Research in Franconia) in Nuremberg, Germany.*

Their archive includes numerous family books, family registers or OFBs for parishes or villages in or bordering Lower and Middle Franconia, as well as some for Austria and other parts of Germany.

*GFF overview of OFBs:* (keep the page in German and use Google translate to translate the content) <https://www.gf-franken.de/de/familienbuecher-und-familienregister.html>

### **Publishers and book sellers**

If you prefer owning a printed OFB, identify the publisher of the book you are interested in and contact them. Below are some examples of OFB book sellers and publishers.

- Badische Ortsfamilienbücher <http://www.badische-ortsfamilienbuecher.de/>
- Cardamina Verlag <https://www.cardamina.net/>
- Gendi Verlags- und Versandbuchhandlung <https://gendi-shop.de/>

### **How do I use OFBs?**

Generally, printed OFBs use a standardized format. Family units are first listed alphabetically by surname of the husband. Secondly, they are listed either chronologically by marriage date or alphabetically by given name of head of household. Each family unit is given a reference number, which is a running number of family units. This number may include letters. These numbers are used to refer to other family units, such as the parents of the couple or the family of married children.

Dates are presented in the DD.MM.YYYY format, with the day being first, followed by month, then the year.

### **Common symbols found in OFBs**

OFBs use many symbols and abbreviations. When using a printed OFB, look for a page explaining the symbols and abbreviations used. This may be located before or after the list of family units. The table below provides some of the most common symbols. See the SLCL handout for a longer list of symbols and abbreviations:

<https://www.slcl.org/sites/default/files/HG%20OSB%20symbols.pdf>.

Symbol	Meaning
*	Birth
+*	Stillborn
get. / ≈	Baptism
∞	Marriage
∞	Divorce
+	Death

## Example of a printed OFB

0584    ♂ 13.5.1705 ref.: Johann Fischer, Maurer <aus 0579> \* 5.10.1681  
I. ♂ <siehe 0581> II. ♂ <siehe 0582> + 1.10.1781 und Magdalena  
Pieler (Bühler), (Tochter des +Heinrich Pieler/Bühler, Neustadt) \* ...  
4 Kinder:  
    Anna Maria get. 26.3.1706 + 5.5.1706  
    Magdalena \* 7.12.1709     <siehe 2504>  
    Peter Jacob \* 14.2.1712 + Paris 30.7.1745 ledig  
    Martin \* 2.9.1716             <siehe 0585; 0587>  
2 weitere Kinder <siehe OFB-La 0611>

In the Example above, the numbers mean the following:

- 0584    is the running number assigned to Johann's family.
- 0579    references Johann's father's family (which would include Johann's siblings).
- 0581    references Johann's first marriage
- 0582    references Johann's second marriage
- 2504    references Magdalena's family unit with her husband
- 0585 and 0587 reference two family units for Martin (he was married twice and had children with each wife)
- 0611    references Johann's family appearing the OFB of Ladenburg.

We learn the following about Johann Fischer:

He was married (the third time) on 13 May 1705. His religious affiliation was Reformed. He was a mason by trade. He was born on 5 May 1681. With the exact known date, he most likely was born in the town of this OFB. Information about his first marriage can be found in family number 0581, and of his second marriage in family number 0582. His wife's surname appeared in the records with the variant spelling of Pieler or Bühler. Her father was deceased at the time of her marriage. Johann and Magdalena had six children, four born in the town of this OFB and two in a different town. The birth date of their first daughter Anna Maria is not known, instead her christening date is listed, as well as her death date. Their daughter Magdalena married, and her family information can be found in family number 2504. Son Peter Jacob died in Paris, unmarried. Son Martin was married twice.

## Using Online-OFBs at Genealogy.net

1. Access the Online-OFBs database at <https://ofb.genealogy.net/>.
2. You will see a map of Europe with hundreds of red location markers, followed by a list of all the OFBs available at this site. The list is organized alphabetically by the individual German states, followed by countries or regions outside of present-day Germany with German settlements. Within each state, country or region, the towns are also listed alphabetically.

3. The left column includes links to view the latest OFBs added online, as well as the associations and organizations involved in the project.
4. The German diacritics Ä, ä, Ö, ö, Ü, ü, and ß are all used on this site. Place names including diacritics are listed in alphabetical order alongside names without diacritics.
5. Find **Eichhorn, East Prussia**. Use Ctrl+F (or Cmd+F) to find the location. When using this search method, the Umlaut does not need to be included, the regular letter can be used.
6. Note the Polish name for the town of Eichhorn. Now click on “Eichhorn.”
7. This page provides a photo of the cemetery and surrounding area, the names of villages included in the parish, a brief history of the village, its current Polish name, a description about how the book was compiled and sources used, a note about surname variations, and contact information.
8. The left column now includes:
  - a. links to
    - i. Gesamtliste der Familiennamen (Complete list of surnames),
    - ii. Geburtsorte auswärtiger Personen (Birthplaces of non-residents), and
    - iii. Sterbeorte weggezogener Personen (Places of death for people who have moved away),
  - b. the number of individuals and families in the book, and
  - c. a list of flags representing different languages.
9. Clicking on a flag will show the information on the webpage in that language if the webpage has been translated into the selected language. Not all OFBs have been translated into all languages. The page for Eichhorn has not be translated into any of the languages listed.  
  
*Note:* Other options of translating the page include using the Google Translate feature when using Google Chrome as your web browser or using [translate.google.com](https://translate.google.com). For the first method, right-click anywhere on the screen and select Translate to English [or your language]. For the second option, go directly to [translate.google.com](https://translate.google.com) and change the language settings to translate from German to English [or your language]. Copy the OFB webpage link and paste it into the German box. Click on the link that appears in the English [or your language] box and you will be taken to a translated version of the webpage.
10. Click on “Gesamtliste der Familiennamen” (Complete list of surnames).
11. You will see names starting with the letter “A” below a row of the alphabet. When searching for a surname, you can click on the first letter of that surname. For some books, there is also the option to click on “alle” (all) to see a list of all surnames.
12. In our example, search for the name **Rudolph Franz Marklein**. Click on the letter “M.” Find the surname “MARKLEIN” (different than Marcklin) and click on it. Find Rudolph Franz in the lower half of the list.

13. Click on “MARKLEIN, Rudolph Franz.” You should see a page like this:

**Local heritage book Eichhorn**  
**Family report**

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♂ **Rudolph Franz MARKLEIN**  
\* 14.06.1864 in Neukrug

Es gibt (eine) ähnliche Person(en) in anderen OFBs.  
**Einblenden!**

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**Bemerkungen: (notes)**

Familien (families)	Kinder (children)
Keine Familie gefunden! (No family found!)	Keine Kinder in den vorliegenden Quellen gefunden! (No children found in used sources!)
Eltern (parents)	Geschwister (siblings)
<b>Vater:</b> (father)      ♂ <b>Hermann ADOLPH MARKLEIN</b> * 05.09.1835 in Glomsien	♂ <b>Hermann Adolph MARKLEIN</b> * 1866 in Neukrug
<b>Mutter:</b> (mother)      ♀ <b>Caroline SCHIPPER</b> * 15.01.1842 in Dörsen + 17.01.1903 in Kraphausen	♂ <b>Karl Gustav MARKLEIN</b> * 1868 in Neukrug, + 1868 in Neukrug ♀ <b>Heinriette Bertha MARKLEIN</b> * 1870 in Neukrug, + 1870 in Neukrug ♀ <b>Justine Wilhelmine MARKLEIN</b> * 1872 in Neukrug

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**Quellen: (sources)**

Source:  
<https://ofb.genealogy.net/famreport.php?ofb=eichhorn&ID=I13829&nachname=Marklein&modus=&som=y&lang=en> :  
accessed 14 July 2021.

14. The entry for Rudolph Franz Marklein provides the following information:

Rudolph was born on 14 June 1864 in Neukrug.

On the introduction page Neukrug had been identified as one of the villages included in the parish of Eichhorn.

No family or children were found. No records of a marriage or any children were found for him in this location.

His parents were:

Hermann Adolph Marklein born on 5 September 1835 in Glomsien, another village belonging to the parish of Eichhorn.

Caroline Schipper born on 15 January 1842 in Dörsen, Eichhorn parish. She died on 17 January 1903 in Kraphausen, not included in the Eichhorn parish.

His four younger siblings were:

Hermann Adolph Marklein born in 1866 in Neukrug.

Karl Gustav Marklein born and died in 1868 in Neukrug.

Heinriette Bertha Marklein born and died in 1870 in Neukrug.

Justine Wilhelmine Marklein born in 1872 in Neukrug.

15. The box in the top right corner indicates that one or more similar individuals appear in other OFBs. Click on the blue word to see details about the individual(s).

16. Each name is clickable. Clicking on a name will place that individual at the top of a family report page, and list any available information about their spouse, children, parents, siblings, and similar individuals in other OFBs.

17. To trace the family line back, click on the parents. To identify descendants, click on the children's names to see if they married and had children.

18. In our example, click on Rudolph's father's name "Hermann ADOLPH MARKLEIN."

19. Hermann Adolph is now at the top of the page. His page provides additional information about him, such as his baptism or christening date and place, the names of his

godparents, his occupation, his marriage date and place, and notes from his marriage record. Information about his parents and fourteen siblings is also provided.

20. Click on Hermann's father's name "Gottfried MARCKLIN" to trace the family back another generation.

## PRACTICE

Follow along with the steps below to find the date of birth for Anna Sophia Rehbaum using the OFB for Wilhelmshausen.

1. Go to the website <https://ofb.genealogy.net/>.
2. Find **Wilhelmshausen**.
3. Click on the town name.
4. On the introduction page for this OFB we see that this OFB includes three villages. The notes explain why they were combined.
5. Click on "English" or the British flag in the left column.
6. The website is now in English, but the introduction has not been translated into English.
7. NOTE: If you wanted to translate the introduction, you would need to click on the German flag or "Deutsch," and follow step 9 above (see page 5).
8. At the top of the left column, under "Funktionen" (Functions), click on "Gesamtliste der Familiennamen" (Complete List of Surnames).
9. Click on the letter "R," then click on the surname "Rehbaum."
10. You will see a list of all the Rehbaums in this book, listed alphabetically by first given name.
11. Go down the list (or use Ctrl+F) to find **Anna Sophia**. She is the ninth name on the list (born on 25 February 1767 in Knickhagen).
12. Click on her name.
13. On her family report page, you will find the following:

Her husband's name (Johannes Henricus Kastrop) with his birth, marriage, and death information.

No children were found for this couple.

The names, birth and death dates and places of both of her parents and eight siblings.
14. Click on her father's name to go back another generation. Keep clicking on the father's name of each family report page you view. You will be able to add three more generations past Anna Sophia.